

VZCZCXR06711
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHROV #0130/01 3491558
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P R 151558Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1207
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY 0006
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0104
RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN 1246

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 000130

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PHUM PREL VT UG
SUBJECT: OUTREACH TO VATICAN ON UGANDA BILL CRIMINALIZING
HOMOSEXUALITY

1. (SBU) Summary: Embassy Vatican has proactively shared with senior Vatican officials USG concerns about the Uganda anti-homosexual bill, and urged them to reach out to Ugandan Catholic bishops to oppose its provisions. In response, a Vatican high-level official confirmed that the Catholic Church is against the criminalization of homosexuality, even though it considers homosexual acts a moral sin. A challenge for the Vatican is to make sure that bishops, other clergy, and Catholics in cultures with strong prejudices against LGBT persons understand that the Church condemns homosexual acts but upholds the freedom of individuals to make their own moral choices about their sexuality. End summary.

¶ 2. (SBU) Embassy Vatican has actively lobbied Holy See officials to take a stand against pending legislation in Uganda that would criminalize homosexuality and in extreme cases, even punish it with death (reftel). On December 11, after the Ambassador raised USG concerns, Cardinal Antonelli Ennio, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family, reaffirmed the Church's position that legal approaches to homosexuality are inappropriate. Antonelli admitted that he had not followed the Uganda controversy closely, but agreed that Catholic bishops there or anywhere should not/not support the criminalization of homosexuality. The Ambassador urged the Cardinal

to make sure bishops in Uganda understood this. Embassy poloff followed up with the Cardinal, providing information about the bill and USG concerns about it.

¶3. (SBU) On December 8, DCM met with Monsignor Peter Wells, Assessor

in the Vatican Secretariat of State's Section for General Affairs

(NSC equivalent) and raised these issues. Monsignor Wells expressed

the Vatican's view that the Church considers homosexuality sinful

but does not believe it should be criminalized. Moreover, the Church is opposed to the death penalty.

¶4. (SBU) Post has also shared USG concerns with officials at the

Vatican's equivalent to the Foreign Ministry, including Archbishop

Luigi Travaglino, who covers Uganda; Monsignor Paolo Gualtieri,

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who

covers the U.S.; and Monsignor Christophe El-Kassis, who manages human rights. Embassy also reached out to Monsignor Anthony Frontiero, at the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (a Vatican think tank).

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The Vatican likely will not want bishops in Uganda to support the criminalization of homosexuality, so Embassy

efforts may well translate into Vatican officials communicating with

bishops in Uganda to reaffirm the Church teaching that homosexuality

is a personal moral decision, which should not be penalized in any

way by judicial authorities. The Vatican, however, likely will shy

away from instructing the bishops directly to denounce the bill, as

bishops everywhere are given a lot of leeway in deciding how to conduct pastoral work in their own dioceses. Embassy Kampala may

want to reach out to the Holy See's Nuncio and to the President

of the Ugandan Conference of Catholic Bishops to further underline

USG concerns. End comment.
DIAZ